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ABSTRACT

The theories of James MacGregor Burns as expressed in his book, "Leadership" (1978), suggest that transformational leadership engages all persons to varying degrees throughout the levels and interstices of society. Burns believes that the transforming leader not only exploits a need or demand of a follower but also looks for his potential motives and seeks to satisfy his higher needs. The result of the leader-follower relationship is that followers are converted to leaders and leaders to moral agents. Along with other contemporary writers, Burns proposes that absolute leadership qualities are non-existent and that leadership, especially in increasingly participatory systems, is individualistic. A central theme throughout his book is that increasing change and conflict in the political and social fabric enable us to see history, not from the perspective of great men, but as the actual experiences of men and women in their relation to one another. In summary, according to Burns, leadership results from meaningful conflict, and is collective, causative, morally purposeful, and elevating. He provides a theoretical base for educators and business enterprises to redesign their systems of leadership. (KC)

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LEADERSHIP AND SOME RELATED PROPOSITIONS: A RESPONSE TO THE IDEAS OF JAMES MAC GREGOR BURNS

.....Berenice D. Bleedorn

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LEADERSHIP AND SOME RELATED PROPOSITIONS: A RESPONSE TO THE IDEAS OF JAMES MAC GREGOR BURNS

.....Berenice D. Bleedorn

"May you live in interesting times" is said to be an ancient Chinese curse. In that sense, our period in history must rate among the most accursed. The balancing blessing is that philosophers and scientists, historians and writers are providing abundant substantive and comprehensive theory on the critical subject of leadership appropriate to these "interesting times".

James MacGregor Burns, in his work on "Leadership", may be among the foremost of authors examining the interaction of political, scientific, and psychological forces that affect our times. His focus is on human growth and development towards the end which, in his words, is the purpose of his writing: "That people can be lifted into their better selves-the secret of transforming leadership and the moral and practical theme of this work."

To a considerable measure, the author can be said to have achieved his purpose. The reader is introduced to the question of leadership from a historical perspective through his examination of political power and process of familiar leaders from the past. In this review the author writes with a clarity and insistence that reflects the urgency of the 80's for skills commensurate with leadership needs of a society in the grips of rapid change and increasing global dimensionality.

The following observations on the ideas expressed by James Macgregor Burns in his prize-winning book on"Leadership" are designed to:

1. provide comment on and responses to principles and recommendations proposed by the author

2. suggest connections between his thinking and that of other writers concerned with the subject of leadership historically, presently, and futuristically

3. present a personal belief system resulting from a synthesis of Burns's "Leadership" and related literature.

I. Definitions of Leadership

Central to the description of leadership in the writing of Burns is the concept of the distinction between Transactional Leadership and Transformational Leadership. In his words (Burns, 1978) "The relations of most leaders and followers are transactional--leaders approach followers with an eye to exchanging one thing for another; jobs for votes or subsidies for campaign contributions. Such transactions comprise the bulk of the relationships among leaders and followers, especially in groups, legislatures, and parties." Such a description registers on the reader with disappointing familiarity! On the other hand his defin-

ition of transforming leadership creates a dynamic connection to the ideas of other enlightened, systemic thinkers and observers of the human scene. Burns says, (1978) "Transforming leadership, while more complex, is more potent. The transforming leader recognizes and exploits an existing need or demand of a potential follower. But, beyond that, the fransforming leader looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower. The result of transforming leadership is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents."

The concept of mutuality between leadership and followership as discussed by Burns is a reflection of the theory of transformation as described by George Ainsworth Land (1973) in his book, "Grow or Die: The Principle of Transformation".

Burns provides effective examples of transactional leadership from political and social arenas. His description of political power and influence in legislative and executive governmental procedures is a reminder of traditional leadership roles and operations, some of which have resulted in bottlenecks and delays in meeting the needs of the people. Current trends in perceptions of leadership are looking for ways of decentralizing the process while at the same time globalizing the vision. A vision of leadership focused on the future will be of a nature that will "get everybody in on the act and still get some action".

An important point in a review of Burns's book needs to be made on the point of followership. He makes repeated reminders of the limitations of literature on leadership with its preoccupation with heroic or demonic figures important in history. His interpretation includes, besides the elitism of highly visible, recognized figures, a concept of leadership that is "no mere game among elitists and no mere populist response, but a structure of action that engages persons, to varying degrees, throughout the levels and among the interstices of society. Only the inert, the alienated, and the powerless are unengaged" (Burns, 1978)

Related to such an interpretation of leadership is the statement from a publication by the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs on "Education for Reflective Leadership" (1981)

> Not everyong in a position of leadership is a leader, or has followers. Leadership is a quality, not a status. Leadership is exerted from different bases. Some in Government; some outside. Through the power of public or private office. Through philanthropy; Through the use of information and ideas; in research, in the press, radio and television. The nongovernmental bases are often centers of initiative; the impetus for change most often comes from outside the formal structures of authority... the decision-makers, however prominent they may be during the stage at which they are decisive, are only the most visible leaders.

Antithetical to leadership as defined by Burns is the bureaucratization of organizations. He provides an analytical discussion of the problems to individualism and the displacement of organizational goals with means reaulting from the building of bureaucracies. His ideas are in agreement with those of Blau (1971) regarding the depersonalization and conditioning for dependency when workers are forced into a rigid adherence to established rules in a strictly hierarchical structure,and the inefficiency that results when "members of an organization become so preoccupied with meticulous application of detailed rules that they lose sight of the very purpose of their action". (Blau, 1971)

Qualities and Origins of Leadership

For Burns, the discussion of leadership qualities seems to abandon the traditional preoccupation with analysis of qualities of mind and traits of character (Tucker, 1977) which characterize the successful leader. Instead, he discusses in considerable detail the genetic and situational influences on the development of the leader figure. In a practical sense, he cites "learning from experience, learning from people, learning from successes and failures, learning from leaders and followers; personality is formed in these reactions to stimuli in social environments" and sums up his position with the claim that "the learning experience of each leader is so unique that fruitful generalization becomes impossible."

Additional uncertainty regarding personality analysis is expressed by a major contributor to research and study of human characteristics (Vernon, 1964). Almost twenty years ago he was suggesting that techniques of studying personality had grown up rather haphazardly. However, he reported general agreement that scientific study of habits, behaviors, and tendencies of humans could be sampled and measured. Burns would seem to be more in agreement with the system offered by Bass (1960), and to focus more on the function of leadership in the broad variety of ways in which leadership and followership integrate to achieve purpose. Types of leadership as formulated by Bass (1960) reflect the attitudes from the work of Burns that help lead away from the absolutism of specific qualities, and broaden the concept of leadership:

Intellectual vs. Authoritative
Compellers vs. Exponents
Formulators vs. Foci of Attention
Volunteer vs. Drafted
General vs. Specialized
Temporary vs. Permanent
Conscious vs. Unconscious
Professional vs. Amateur
Personal vs. Impersonal
Direct vs. Indirect
Autocratic vs. Paternalistic vs. Democratic
Small Groups vs. Mass Leader vs. Administrator

Such an array of variables underscores the position that leadership and followership are androgenous in their relationship, and that leadership, especially in increasingly participatory systems, is quite individualistic. Each leader must be a follower in many things; many followers are also leaders in some things.

It is in his section on Transactional Leadership that Burns addresses himself to the concept of charisma. In his discussion of Opinion Leadership: The Missing Piece of the Puzzle, he differentiates between the Mobilization of Political Opinion, The Alignment of Opinion, and the Conversion of Opinion. His reputation as a political scientist must have its foundation in some of these astute and sensitive observations regarding the political scene and the shapers of history, not only in the American systems, but also in those of other nations. His biographical treatment of well-known charismatic leaders, both pro-social and anti-social, raises interest in the reader on the somewhat elusive quality of charisma. Max Weber's definition (Weber, 1968) casts that quality in a more elitist category than recent public writing would suggest, when he says, "Charisma-a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities...not accessible to the ordinary person." His pronouncement that charisma can only be "awakened" and "tested", not "learned" or "taught" would seem to agree in essence with Burnsss basic perceptions.

There is a most enlightening statement by Max Weber on charisma and the change process across time, from the publication by Gerth (1946). In this detour on the subject of Charisma, it seems worth quoting:

> There arise from time to time men who bear to the moral condition of their age much the same relations as men of genius bear to its intellectual condition. They anticipate the moral standard of a later age, cast abroad conceptions of disinterested virtue, of philanthropy, or of self-denial that seem to have no relation to the spirit of their time, inculcate duties and suggest motives of action that appear to most men altogether chimerical. Yet the magnetism of their perfections tells powerfully upon their contemporaries. An enthusiasm is kindled, a group of adherents is formed, and many are emancipated from the moral condition of their age. Yet the full effects of such a movement are but transient. The first enthusiasm dies away, surrounding circumstances resume their ascendency, the pure faith is materialized encrusted with conceptions that are alien to its nature, dislocated, and distorted, till its first features have almost disappeared. The moral teaching, being unsuited to the time, becomes inoperative until its appropriate civilization has dawned; or at most it faintly and imperfectly filters through an accumulation of dogmas and thus accelerates in some measure, the arrival of the condition it requires.

Such a subtle and long-range charismatic influence of leadership has relevance and promise for the uncertain times of the 80's.

III. The Crisis of Leadership

A central theme throughout the work on Leadership by Burns is his awareness of increasing rates of change in the social and political fabric. His repeated references to the "complexities, inconsistancies, and interrelationships among the various parts of the American system" are an expression of the concept of the shift in progress from an emphasis on the interpretation of leadership as a transaction to its interpretation as a transformative process. At the same time acknowledging the more traditional perception of leadership from the top down in a hierchical succession of roles, control, and power for its accomplishments throughout world history, his positivism and expectation for the future seems to argue for learning and practicing the art of leadership at a higher, more integrated level of transformation. A current application of a "bottom up", integrated, intersupportive network of transformative society can be seen in the increasing attention being paid to Marilyn Ferguson's "Aquarian Conspiracy" and its integrative effect on the broad range of disparate efforts by individuals, clusters, groups, and organizationsaware of the multiplicity of needs in institutions and individuals in the process of radical change. Ferguson (1979) is providing a rallying point for agents of positive change throughout the world in the many places where her book has been translated. The process by which leaders become leaders in terms of what they do is thus made available for those with that indispensable quality of leadership suggested by Harlan Cleveland (1980), the urge and ability to "act today in ways consistent with a studied view of the future."

James MacGregor Burns arrives, in his thinking towards a general theory of leadership, at a dynamic but ambiguous conclusion, incorporating his major arguments for a transforming, leader/follower, interrelated, purposeful process. He says, "The ultimate causal impact of leadership can be understood only in the flow of specific leadership/ followership interactions emerging from the clash and congruence of hierarchies of motivations... It enables us to see history... from the bottom up and not merely as the 'great men' from the top down. It enables us to see history... as 'the sum of the actual experience of actual men and women in their relation to one another and to an actual, three-dimensional, empirically experienced, physical environment." His ideas underscore the familiar themes from the writing of John Gardner (1981) and his concept of the leader as renewer.

Burns provides the synthesis; he provides the balance:

> The role of the "great man" need not be diminished in this analytical process; he is only de-mythicized and de-mystified. That role is all the more legitimate and powerful if top leaders help make their followers into leaders. Only by standing on their shoulders can true greatness in leadership be achieved.

IV. Education for Leadership

How, then, is society to meet the challenge of radical growth and change? What manner of leadership and followship will be equal to the global dynamics of the human family? What are the educational imperatives attendant on solutions to the accumulating problems?

Bush makes clear his perception of the synonymous relationships between leadership and learning. He says:

> We have conceived of leadership in these pages as the tapping of existing and potential motive and power bases of followers by leaders for the purpose of achieving intended change. We conceive of education in essentially the same terms.... Ultimately education and leadership shade into each other to become almost inseparavle, but only when both are defined as the reciprocal raising of levels of motivation rather than indoctrination or coercion.

His leadership of "large ideas, broad direction, and strong commitment" with specific references to moral and ethical standards is identified through a number of descriptives:

1. Leadership is collective. "One-man leadership" is a contradiction in terms.

2. Leadership is dissensual. The dynamo of political action, meaningful conflict, produces engaged leaders, who in turn generate more conflict among people.

3. Leadership is causative. True leadership is not merely symbolic or ceremonial.

4. Leadership is morally purposeful. The problem is always to choose key values and to create a social structure that embodies them.

5. Transforming leadership is elevating. It is moral but not moralistic. Leaders engage with followers, but from higher levels of motality; in the enmeshing of goals and values both leaders and followers are raised to more principled levels of judgement.

For each of his descriptions of leadership, the substitution of "Education" for "leadership" would be appropriate. Reassessment of Education is finding current practices very short of the mark if educational goals include the purpose expressed by Harlan Cleveland in his article, "Learning the Art of Leadership: The Worldwide Crisis in Governance Demands New Approaches" (Cleveland, 1980). He charges that educational and social practices are "not helping to hone the fresh new integrative minds we are going to need to get through the 1980's and 1990's into the 21st century." As Director of the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota, Cleveland is leading significant action in the interpretation of concepts on leadership from Bush's writing. There is an urgency and intensity in the Institute's program on Education for Reflective Leadership (1981). The prospectus leaves no doubt as to those qualities in its description of "The faces of leadership: physical energy, hard thinking, suasive style, taste for ambiguity, unwarranted optimism, preference for motion (with 'history' or against it.)"

Burns makes repeated references to the teaching role of leadership as a model to "shape and alter and elevate the motives and values and goals of followers." Education with specific attention to the moral and ethical values prerequisite to effective transforming leadership has the benefit of the definitive works of Lawrence Kohlberg (1971)(1975). His assertion that "Basic values are different largely because we are at different levels of maturity in thinking about basic moral and social issues and concepts" is a clue to the dilemma of globla morality and the philosophical and psychological justification for an emphasis on moral development in educational patterns. The complexities of the "global commons" call for complex thought processes. The simplistic dependence on the Golden Rule, in the words of Erik Erikson, (1964) "an all too primitive ancestor of more logical principles," needs to be amended to include "the mutuality of a divided function." The divided function of leadership/Followership is dependent on mutualistic, moral development.

SUMMARY

James MacGregor Burns seems to have achieved the self-stated purpose of his book: "That people can be lifted into their better selves is the secret of transforming leadership and the moral and practical theme of this work." He has provided at least a theoretical vehicle for transcanding the limited perception of leadership as power, bureaucracy, and manipulation to one of mutuality in its most purposeful, human integration. His vision extends beyond the measurable, countable, industrial indices of human purpose and polity to account for the uncountable, subjective shared values more appropriate to an increasingly non-industrial society. His message looks across time. To a lesser degree he perceives leadership across space. The idea of "thinking globally and acting locally" promoted at the Fourth General Assembly of the World Future Society in Toronto in 1980 was lost in his emphasis on United States political considerations.

At a personal level, this book has both satisfied and intensified a growing sense of impatience with local, national, and global leadership out of sync with the times. The satisfaction is in the realization that informed scholars are providing practitioners with a theoretical base for redesigning systems of leadership in educational and business enterprises. The impatience mounts with the realization that insight and argument are overdue for implementation and action. A specific disappointment is in the fact that reference to the concept of creativity and its importance in the development of human potential has minimal mention in the text and no visibility in the index. The discipline of Creativity in the field of Educational Psychology has critical relevance to the human, interactive forces of mutualistic leadership and followership.

In total, this book serves most importantly in the study of leadership as a solid springboard for champions of a pluralistic polity. The implication for educationists is particularly challenging. Harlan Cleveland's statement (1980) echoes the message:

> People are forever saying that leadership is an art, not a science or technology -- a matter of instinct, not the product of thinking. The classroom is indeed an unlikely place to learn charisma. But leadership is the art that determines the social fallout of science and points technology toward human purposes, and especially to relate them to each other, is not carried in our genes. It has to be learned. So we educators cannot cop out; equipping minds for leadership ought to be what's "higher" about higher education.

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